



Doctor Ignorance About Nutrition Not Defensible



In a commentary published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* 01 July 2019, Neal Barnard, M.D., emphasised the importance for physicians today to be more familiar with nutrition knowledge.

Dr. Barnard, Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine president, explained how some of the main health concerns – diabetes, obesity, heart disease and some cancers – are caused by unhealthy diets.

Recalling from previous experience, Dr. Barnard, told of a patient admitted to hospital due to a foot infection as a result of type 2 diabetes. Even though symptoms of this disease are manageable with a change in diet, it was recommended that the patient undergo amputation.

The source of type 2 diabetes is rooted in everyday food choices and unfortunately, 61% of internal medicine residents have little to no nutrition training according to a 2018 survey. Also, although it was found that 94% of resident physicians know the importance of nutrition knowledge only 14% felt they had enough training to initiate these talks.

Diets containing fruit, vegetables, beans and grains can help manage health issues such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension and cancer. However, only 9.3% of US adults eat enough vegetable to meet the recommendations and only 12.2% consume enough fruit.

In the commentary, Dr. Barnard proposes five steps to overcoming the lack of nutrition knowledge in physicians and patients:

1. Medical education should continue and nutrition training should be required of internal medicine physicians
2. Dietitians should be included in more clinical decisions
3. Electronic Medical Records should include questions regarding nutrition
4. Doctors should model healthy eating habits themselves
5. Medical communities should support healthier eating environments, e.g. in hospitals, schools

Progress to improve nutrition knowledge and training is starting to take effect across the USA. Washington D.C. councilmember, Mary Cheh, has recently introduced a bill for continued nutrition training for nurses, physicians and physician assistants. Similar legislation has also been introduced in New York.

Source: [JAMA](#)

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